

Introduction

The City of Fairfax has a strong sense of community and an attractive small town atmosphere. This Comprehensive Plan, as the City's official guide to future development, seeks to protect and enhance those distinctive qualities of the City.

The City of Fairfax is valued by its residents, business owners, and employees for its sense of community and its attractive small town atmosphere. It is a place where citizens take pride in participating in their local government – a place where the individual's opinion is still important. However, because of regional influences and other strong pressures to change, the City faces the considerable task of protecting and enhancing its identity and distinctive character.

Several elements combine to formulate that character. Most notably, Fairfax is a city predominantly composed of neighborhoods and is generally perceived as a residential community. In addition, the large amount of parkland and open space located throughout the City contributes to that character. Old Town Fairfax provides an interesting historic and urban focal point at the City's center. Principal entryways are located at Kamp Washington, Fairfax Circle, Northfax (at Fairfax Boulevard and Chain Bridge Road), Main Street (at Pickett Road), and the Southern Gateway on Chain Bridge Road near School Street. These features combine to define an environment very different from the remainder of Northern Virginia – an environment in which tradition, quality of life and livability are emphasized amidst concentrated urban development.

Because of its central location within the Northern Virginia region, however, the City is experiencing pressures from the intense development now underway immediately outside its boundaries (see Map INTRO-1). Between 250,000 and 300,000 vehicles travel through the City each day, far more than double the numbers seen in the 1980s. Many of those vehicles intrude onto neighborhood streets to seek relief from congested roadways, disturbing residential tranquility and creating safety hazards. In addition, portions of the City's commercial strips have become cluttered with signage, traffic conflicts, and unsightly development. These intrusions detract from the very qualities that make the City a desirable place to live and work.

Recent and projected changes in the composition of the population in and around the City have affected the need for public and private services and housing. This is

particularly poignant because a large proportion of students in City schools (particularly Lanier Middle School and Fairfax High School) are residents of Fairfax County. City and nearby county growth combine to affect attendance projections; current attendance projections estimate that enrollment growth in City schools at their current boundaries will outpace the overall rate of student enrollment growth throughout the Fairfax County Public Schools system. The City made key changes affecting its public school facilities. Two elementary schools were closed, while all four remaining public schools were renovated and modernized, positioning them for effective long-term use.

Within the City itself, the composition of households is changing, and family size, while having increased over the last two decades, remains at lower levels than during the high-growth era after World War II. Recent housing development has addressed many of these trends as have renovation-oriented City programs. In addition, the population in the City and region continues to grow older, underscoring the demand for specialized housing to meet the needs of the elderly.

**Map INTRO-1
Northern Virginia Region**



Source: City of Fairfax

George Mason University (GMU), situated at the City's southern border, has experienced tremendous growth in recent years and rising enrollment and on-campus housing levels are expected to continue into the foreseeable future. The proximity and the rising regional and national profile of GMU will have a profound impact upon the future evolution of the City. If properly addressed, the demand for housing, goods and services related to the academic community, and the range of GMU's cultural and educational offerings, can result in mutually beneficial opportunities for both the City and the University.

Many contrasting factors must be properly managed to result in a positive future for the City. Even though the City is nearly fully developed, significant changes will likely occur in the upcoming years as new development and substantial redevelopment occur. This Comprehensive Plan examines current conditions and offers direction to enhance the City's function, appearance, and livability. This Plan also seeks to provide the opportunity to examine the various forces affecting the City – such as redevelopment of commercial areas, aging residential neighborhoods and the desire to protect open space – that, if creatively guided, can support the important and unique assets to its citizens and the region. This plan seeks to address issues from the perspective of the common good, rather than for the benefit or detriment of any one sector of the City. All who contributed to the preparation of this Plan hope that it will succeed in maintaining and improving a high quality of life while responsibly managing and planning for the changes that inevitably lie ahead.

Purpose of the Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is the City's official policy guide for future development-related decisions. This Plan is general and long-range in nature, and provides a picture of how the community wishes to develop over the next 15 to 20 years. As a policy document, the Plan provides a framework for the City's residents and policy makers to conceptualize how the City should look and function, and the best methods or strategies for achieving those ideals.

Authority for the Plan

The Commonwealth of Virginia requires that every local governing body adopt a comprehensive plan. Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia states in part that the local planning commission must prepare a plan which “shall be general in nature...” and “... shall show the locality's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan.” The plan must recommend methods of implementation such as a zoning ordinance or

zoning district map, a subdivision ordinance, and a capital improvements program. In addition, the comprehensive plan may include, but is not limited to, the designation of land use, transportation systems, public facilities and services, historic areas, ground water protection measures, and areas for urban renewal and development of affordable housing.

State law requires that the plan be reviewed by the planning commission at least once every five years to determine whether it should be amended.

The Planning Process

The Comprehensive Plan is developed as a logically calculated series of events and actions, and is the result of a process that blends technical input with community ideals. The process used in developing this Plan is summarized below and in Figure INTRO-1.

The last major update of the City's Comprehensive Plan occurred in 2002-04, and was adopted by the City Council in July, 2004. The public input process implemented at that time included the following:

- Information pertaining to the City's historic resources, public facilities, population, environment, economy, housing, transportation and land use was collected and analyzed. This information included the report of the Fairfax 2020 Commission, the previous 1997 Comprehensive Plan, and all policy documents prepared after March 25, 1997. The elements were combined to produce a solid base upon which to construct the revised Comprehensive Plan.
- Citizen opinions on issues facing the City were ascertained in a variety of ways. Four “Open Mic” sessions were held in 2002, at which members of the City Council, the Planning Commission and City staff displayed background information for each section of the Comprehensive Plan and solicited public input in an informal exchange of ideas.
- Civic associations, City boards and commissions and citizen and business associations were invited to present their views in a special meeting with the Planning Commission during the Comprehensive Plan revision process.
- Monthly articles in the CityScene newsletter from the summer of 2002 through public hearings in 2003 informed City residents that the Plan update process was underway and invited public participation. Finally, the draft Plan revision was circulated to all City civic associations, boards and commissions for comment prior to public hearings.

- The Planning Commission and Community Development and Planning staff developed a vision to be integrated into the overall strategic plan.
- Using the background information acquired earlier, input from the Open Mic Sessions, other citizen comments and 2020 Commission recommendations, the Planning Commission developed a set of goals.
- Various alternatives were then identified and evaluated, and recommendations were developed. The actual plan for the City's future takes the form of goals, objectives and strategies that were developed to carry out those goals, and the recommendations for the City's transportation system and future land use.
- As required by State law, the Planning Commission held public hearings and certified the recommended Comprehensive Plan for City Council consideration.
- The City Council held the required public hearings and adopted the Plan.

As noted above, the last major update of the City of Fairfax Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2004, and the Code of Virginia requires that the plan be reviewed by the Planning Commission at least once every five years (§15.2-2230). The City of Fairfax Planning Commission conducted an extensive review of potential revisions to the existing Plan from November, 2008 through September, 2010. After that

review, it was determined that a complete update resulting in a new Plan was appropriate. In order to address items that require more immediate attention and allow adequate time for a thorough evaluation of the Plan, the update is to be conducted as a two-step process, including: 1) amending the existing Plan, and 2) drafting a new Plan.

The revisions in this first step have included bringing data and other information up to date, as well as incorporating revisions discussed by the Planning Commission and City Council over the last few years. This document includes amendments to the existing Plan. The second step will involve a reconsideration of the entire document, including the vision, goals, and objectives that the City will pursue into the future. The drafting of an entirely new Plan, which will commence in the future, will also include a process designed to encourage thoughtful public input and involvement. A significant level of public participation will be critical during the second step to ensure that community ideals are reflected in what will be a new Plan for the future of the City.

Furthermore, with all reviews or revisions of the Comprehensive Plan – whether five-year reviews or full-scale rewrites – it is critical that discussions between the Planning Commission and City Council occur to ensure that the public bodies tasked with the review have a consistent goal and a unified purpose.

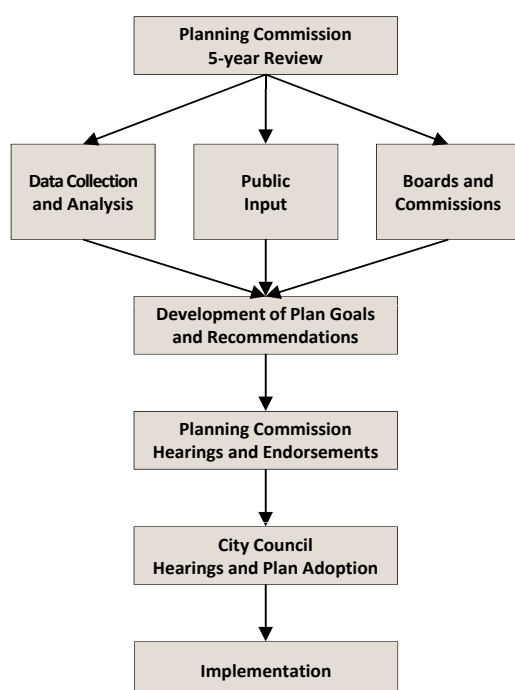
The City's planning process does not end with the adoption of any Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations contained in a Plan must be implemented through the use of the tools described in the Implementation section. Most importantly, the Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a living document, evolving with important changes the City may undergo. Rather than remaining finalized between review periods, the plan may be updated to reflect events that may require new policies to be forged.

Previous Planning Efforts

The City's efforts at comprehensive planning date back to the 1950s. In April 1955, the then Town of Fairfax was presented with the "Master Plan Report," which had been prepared by a consultant under the direction of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. Although the Town did not take action on the plan, the report was an important first step towards assessing the City's future needs.

In June 1968, the "Comprehensive Development Plan" became the City's first adopted comprehensive plan. That plan was amended in October 1971 and again in May 1973. A new comprehensive plan was adopted in October 1975, and another new plan was adopted in June 1982. The 1982 plan was amended in February 1983, and remained in effect

Figure INTRO-1
Development of the
Comprehensive Plan



until the adoption of a new plan in 1988. The 1988 plan was reviewed in 1991, 1993, and 1997 and remained in effect until the adoption of the 2004 plan, which was active until the approval of this amended version of the plan.

Using This Plan

This Plan is divided into sections that address the People; the Economy; the Environment; Housing; Public Facilities and Services; Parks, Recreation and Open Space; Community Appearance; Historic Resources; Cultural Resources; Transportation; Land Use and Implementation. Each of these sections contains background information on the referenced subject. In addition, some sections discuss projected or anticipated conditions. With the exception of People (demographics) and Implementation, each section includes a goal, objectives and strategies, all of which provide a framework for future actions. Also, a Plan component is included in both the Transportation and Land Use sections to provide more specific recommendations to guide future transportation and land use decisions. Finally,

the Implementation section describes the means by which the recommendations contained in the various sections of this Plan may be realized.

Before describing the basics of each of the plan's elements (chapters), it is necessary to have an understanding of the City's history and present-day organizational structure. Additionally, it is important to understand the vision that has been created to sustain the City's character well into the future. These details are described in the sections that follow.

The City—Past and Present—A Brief History

The area that now comprises the City of Fairfax was first settled in the early-to-mid-1700s by farmers pushing out from the Tidewater region of Virginia and by Marylanders crossing the Potomac into Virginia for economic and religious reasons. Initially it was a part of Truro Parish, and became a part of Fairfax County when the County was established in 1742.



From the G.M Hopkins' Atlas of Fifteen Miles Around Washington, D.C. (1868)

When Fairfax County was first formed, a court was established at a place called Freedom Hill near the present-day Tyson's Corner. The court remained there for only ten years, and was relocated to Alexandria in 1752 because of the growing importance of Alexandria as a port city and for protection from Indian raids. In 1800, it became necessary once again to relocate the County court due to congressional legislation that proposed to include Alexandria in the new Federal capital.

A site at the junction of Ox Road and Little River Turnpike was selected as the location for the new County courthouse. Ox Road had originally been an Indian trail that was widened by King Carter's men in order to gain easier access to copper deposits found in the northern regions of the County. Little River Turnpike was a private venture of the Little River Turnpike Company, which was authorized by turnpike charter to build and operate for profit a road from Alexandria to the ford of the Little River in Aldie, Virginia.

Thus, in 1799 the Fairfax County Court was moved from Alexandria and established at this site, then known as Earp's Corner. A new courthouse was built on a two-acre parcel of land conveyed to the Court by Richard Ratcliffe, a prosperous resident of the area, for the sum of one dollar. Completed in 1800, that courthouse remains today as the north wing of the historic Fairfax County Courthouse complex.

A small village soon grew up around the courthouse and, by an Act of the Virginia legislature in 1805, the village was incorporated as the Town of Providence – even though it was generally referred to as Fairfax Court House. The original town consisted of 14 acres of land subdivided into one-half acre lots. The lots were then sold at a public auction with the stipulation that a house at least 16 feet square with a brick or stone chimney be built and ready for habitation within seven years from the date of sale.

Throughout the early 1800s, the town remained small, but it prospered due to the presence of the court and to the heavy traffic along Ox Road and Little River Turnpike. By 1835, the Town of Providence consisted of approximately 50 houses, the county buildings, three mercantile stores, four taverns, and one common school. In 1850, the name of "Fairfax," a name abandoned by the renamed Town of Culpeper, was selected for the town, although this action was not ratified by the General Assembly until 1874.

Fairfax was the scene of several notable events during the Civil War. Captain John Quincy Marr, the first officer fatality of the Confederacy, was killed at Fairfax Court House on June 1, 1861. By late 1862, the town was occupied by

Union forces commanded by Brigadier General Edwin H. Stoughton. In a daring raid led by Confederate Lieutenant (later Colonel) John S. Mosby in March 1863, General Stoughton was captured while he slept in a house that is the present-day rectory of Truro Church. Also in 1863, Antonia Ford, whose girlhood home was the Ford Building on Chain Bridge Road, was imprisoned as a spy for aiding Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart.

After 1865, Fairfax and the rest of Northern Virginia set about repairing the ravages of war. The Town of Fairfax continued to serve as the governmental seat of Fairfax County, which had become an area of prosperous farms and estates. Several of the homes that were part of nearby farms or country estates are now within the boundaries of the present City of Fairfax.

In 1900, the Town of Fairfax was a community of farms and small estates with a total population of about 400 persons. It contained one bank, a hotel, a drug store, a carriage and wagon factory, a newspaper office and several general stores. These businesses were concentrated primarily on Main Street between what is now Chain Bridge Road and East Street. In addition, the Town included several churches, a school and lodges.

In 1904, the Washington, Arlington and Falls Church electric railway was completed. Its terminus was located at the abandoned Wilcoxon Hotel on Main Street near the County Courthouse. The advent of this important transportation link helped to revive the economy of Fairfax both in terms of new commercial development in the downtown area and as a quick and convenient means for transporting dairy products to distribution centers in Washington. It also brought about the first wave of suburbanization as more county residents were able to work in Washington while residing in the suburbs.

Other transportation improvements continued to fuel the suburbanization of the County. After World War I, bus lines were established and automobiles became an increasingly popular means of transportation. As a result, new and better roads were being demanded. In 1935, Lee Highway was extended westward from Fairfax Circle to Kamp Washington.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the growth of employment opportunities with the Federal Government, coupled with improvements to the area's transportation system, further reinforced the suburbanization trend. Even with the closing of the electric railway in 1939, the Town continued to grow. Between 1940 and 1950, the Town's population doubled to almost 2,000 persons.

In the 1950s, the population of the Washington metropolitan area began growing rapidly and the movement of this population to the suburbs accelerated. This was also a significant period in the history of the City's planning and growth. Between 1955 and 1960, the Town of Fairfax annexed land to the east, north and west, expanding its boundaries from 2.5 square miles to approximately six square miles. Consequently, the number of housing units in the Town increased from approximately 1,400 to 3,700.

In 1961, under a charter granted by the Virginia General Assembly, the Town incorporated as an independent city. This action was sought by the Town in response to the then-pending incorporation of Fairfax County as an independent city, an action that would have deprived the Town of its autonomy. At that time, the City contained 3,688 housing units and a population of 14,434 persons.

Despite the City's independent status, it elected to enter into a number of contracts with Fairfax County for the provision of public services, including education. In addition, a 1965 agreement established a 50-acre "County enclave" surrounded by the City, which included the County Courthouse/Massey Building area.

During the 1960s, many of the City's larger properties, including some farms near Main Street, were developed or redeveloped. One large dairy farm on Pickett Road was sold for use as an oil tank farm, which continues to be the single largest industrial development in the City.

New types of housing were built for the first time in the City in the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1966, 16 apartment complexes were built containing a total of 2,000 units. In the late 1960s, four residential townhouse developments were built in the City with a total of 355 units. Nonetheless, single-family residences remained the City's predominant land use.

The City also experienced rapid growth in commercial development in the 1960s. During that time, seven small office buildings were constructed in the City's downtown area and some older downtown residences were converted to office uses. The City Hall was also built during that period, as was the controversial 12-story Massey Building in the County's governmental complex.

Transportation improvements had a profound impact on development patterns. Both the completion of the Capital Beltway (I-495) and the widening of Little River Turnpike from two lanes to four lanes reinforced the movement of retail commercial development to suburban locations with

good automobile access. This trend was evident in the City as retail activity shifted from the downtown area to larger vacant parcels along the City's major east-west highways. In total, nine shopping centers were constructed during the 1960s as well as numerous individual retail businesses.

In the early 1970s, the portion of Main Street west of the City's downtown was widened to four lanes with a median containing turn lanes. The City's largest shopping center, Fair City Mall, was constructed in 1974 near the intersection of Main Street and Pickett Road. That same year, construction began on the Comstock townhouse development adjacent to the Fair City Mall. The completion of both this townhouse development, and Great Oaks, a residential planned development, was the last major residential activity of the 1970s. Meanwhile, however, significant residential growth was taking place in nearby sections of Fairfax County.

By this time, one-tenth of the developed land in the City was being used for retail or office purposes. The City contained many "suburban" shopping centers, typically composed of supermarkets, drug stores and a range of smaller shops – but none large enough to function as a regional shopping center.

Also during the 1970s, several office buildings were completed in and near the City's downtown area. Office buildings constituted the largest percentage of new construction during the late 1970s, and total office supply in the City increased dramatically. Much of the new office and retail space was built in the western part of the City. Along Lee Highway, offices and restaurants replaced old motels, trailer parks and automobile service stations, while other development was taking place on vacant land.

Declining household size from 1970 to 1980 resulted in a slight decline in total City population. This trend of declining population and household size stabilized, however, in the 1980s. Boundary adjustments in 1992 and 1994 and new residential development within the City added several hundred new residents to the relatively static population, bringing the total to more than 20,000 residents.

The major forces shaping development in the City in the 1980s were an office construction boom in the Washington area and the continuing growth and dispersion of employment centers and residential communities throughout the suburbs. The rapid emergence of the suburb first as a place to live, then as a place to live and shop, and finally as a place in which to work, as well, occurred without an adequate transportation system in place. The

provision of an adequate and responsive transportation system became and continues to be essential to ensure the quality of life in the City and region.

The early 1990s presented a series of challenges to the City, the region, and the nation as a whole. A widespread economic recession in the mid to late-1980s severely limited new construction and brought about declining employment and rising office vacancy rates. To meet these challenges, the City began a series of economic development initiatives including creation of the Economic Development Office, tasked with implementation of a marketing campaign to promote the City, and the Economic Development Authority that began work on a series of site-specific analyses to examine ways in which the City might attract quality future development projects to expand the City's tax base and serve its residents and workers.

In the mid-1990s, the City began a major program of investment in upgrading both an aging infrastructure, particularly through planned improvements to the storm water management system, and aging residential neighborhoods. Several new housing developments, primarily upscale residential, were completed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, adding a much-needed element to the City's housing stock. Supporting community upgrade efforts, approving new development and transportation projects, maintaining a high quality of life defined by its unique "small town" character, and seeking to accommodate new technologies are underlying principles that this Comprehensive Plan establishes to carry the City forward into the next two decades and beyond.

Governmental Structure

The City's governmental structure is composed of elected officials and appointed boards, commissions, authorities and committees as well as administrative operations.

Mayor and Council

The City has a Council-Manager form of government. Under this structure, legislative functions are performed by the elected body composed of a Mayor and six Council members. The Mayor and Council are elected on an at-large, non-partisan basis for concurrent two-year terms. The Mayor presides over Council meetings, casts the deciding vote in the event of a tie, and represents the City in a ceremonial capacity.

The City Council is responsible for establishing and appointing members to boards and commissions, and charging them with specific responsibilities. Many of the City's boards and commissions provide recommendations to the Council to assist in its decision making. Those bodies directly concerned with planning-related issues are identified in the Boards and Commissions section below.

School Board

Elected school boards are authorized by Section 22.1-57.3 of the Code of Virginia. The City's five-member school board, elected at-large every two years, executes the school tuition contract with the County, implements the annual operating budget and develops the school facilities improvement program. City schools are operated through a contractual agreement with the Fairfax County Public School System and are administered as a separate district by the City School Board and its Superintendent.

Treasurer & Commissioner of the Revenue

The voters elect a Treasurer and Commissioner of the Revenue to four-year terms. The Treasurer provides for the collection of all City revenues, the disbursement of all City funds and the investment of City funds. The Commissioner of the Revenue provides personal property and business tax assessments and Virginia income tax administration.

Boards and Commissions

The City has numerous boards, commissions, authorities and committees that perform valuable services to the community. Table INTRO-1 provides a brief description of each of these predominantly volunteer organizations that are appointed by City Council and the Circuit Court.

City Administration

The administration of City operations is performed under the direction of the City Manager. The Manager, who serves at the pleasure of the Council, is also responsible for appointing the City's department heads. The department heads are responsible for the operations of the various departments, which are listed below.

- City Manager (including Historic Resources, Community Relations, Personnel and Human Services)

Table INTRO-1

City Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Authorities

(Boards serve three-year terms unless otherwise noted)

NAME	RESPONSIBILITIES
Planning Commission (4-year terms)	Plans for the future development of the City and hears applications for zoning changes, planned developments and subdivisions; provides recommendations to City Council on the Comprehensive Plan and Capital Improvements Program.
Board of Zoning Appeals (5-year terms)	Decides appeals of Zoning Administrator's opinions as well as specific variances and special use permit requests.
Board of Architectural Review	Reviews and approves exterior architectural features and landscaping throughout the City, with additional responsibilities in historic overlay districts.
Electoral Board	Oversees voting machines, election materials, and officers of elections and certifies election results.
Board of Equalization of Real Estate Assessments	Hears appeals of assessed value of real estate.
Parks and Recreation Advisory Board	Studies and makes recommendations on park and recreation facilities and programs.
Community Appearance Committee	Develops, promotes and coordinates voluntary efforts to improve the City's appearance.
City University Coordinating Committee	Reports and makes recommendations on the relationships and roles of business, the community and the University. (Currently inactive).
Commission on the Arts	Encourages and provides opportunities for artistic expression.
Human Services Committee (term length coincides with members of their representative boards)	Deals with matters relating to emerging trends and unmet needs for human services in the City.
Board of Building Code Appeals	Hears appeals to the BOCA code and health officer and makes recommendations for code changes to the state board.
Personnel Advisory Board	Hears grievances of City employees.
Economic Development Authority (4-year terms)	Promotes redevelopment and actively markets the City's commercial areas and engages in site-specific studies; encompasses work previously covered by the Industrial Development Authority.
Board of Electrical Examiners	Meets on demand to hear appeals of City inspectors.
Board of Plumbing Examiners	Meets on demand to hear appeals of City inspectors.
Board of Refrigeration, Heating & Air Conditioning Examiners	Meets on demand to hear appeals of City inspectors.
Historic Fairfax City, Inc. (5-year terms)	A nonprofit organization concerned with promoting interest in and preserving the City's history; provides recommendations and advice to City Council and Board of Architectural Review; administers the Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center.
Commission for Women	Keeps current on all issues concerning women and investigates human resources needs of the community (open to men and women).

- Community Development and Planning (including Economic Development Office)
- Finance
- Fire & Rescue Services (including Building and Fire Code Administration)
- Parks and Recreation
- Police
- Public Works (including Transportation)
- Utilities
- Information Technology

Regional Liaison

As a component of the Washington Metropolitan Region, issues with region-wide implications including transportation, air quality, water supply and social issues all affect the City. The City participates in regional approaches to these and other issues through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Major regional boards to which the City belongs are described in Table INTRO-2.

Table INTRO-2

Regional Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Authorities

NAME	RESPONSIBILITIES
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments	Addresses regional problems in the areas of transportation, housing, air and water pollution, water supply, economic development, recycling, public health, public safety, foster and child care, and the elderly.
Northern Virginia Planning District Commission	Promotes orderly development of the district's physical, social, and economic requirements by planning and helping governmental subdivisions to plan for the future.
Fairfax County Commission on Aging	Informs the community of the needs of the elderly and makes legislative and budgetary recommendations on issues faced by the elderly.
Fairfax County Project Selection Committee	Makes recommendations on applications from local jurisdictions and nonprofit organizations for Federal support of projects via Community Development Block Grant funds.
Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board	Oversees the mental-health, mental retardation and substance-abuse treatment services of the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church and the county of Fairfax.
Fairfax Area Disability Services Board	Advises local governments relating to the service needs of persons with physical and sensory disabilities and implements the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Northern Virginia Community College Board	Provides local leadership and approves items to be recommended to the state community college board.
Northern Virginia Transportation Commission	Provides an avenue for interjurisdictional cooperation in long-range transportation efforts for Northern Virginia.
Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority	Plans for, acquires, develops, constructs, operates and maintains a system of regional parks, in cooperation between the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun.
Woodburn Center for Community Mental Health Advisory Board	Provides policy planning and guidance for the Center and serves as an avenue for communications with the community.

The Vision—Building on Our Respected Traditions; Addressing Our Pressing Concerns

The Comprehensive Plan is a collective vision of the future of the City of Fairfax. Our community's vision evolved from the examination of current policy documents in the City from the perspective of citizen input during "Open Mic" Sessions, public hearings and work sessions, meetings with Civic Associations, Business Groups and other interested parties, as well as input from all City boards and commissions.

The Open Mic public input sessions revealed a wide variety of important opportunities and concerns. These opportunities and concerns led to a vision of the future for the City of Fairfax involving nearly every aspect of City life. The sum of the input sources led to the following components of the community's vision, summarized below and articulated fully within the Comprehensive Plan's chapters.

Guiding Principles

The City of Fairfax places a high priority on certain principles that go beyond the more traditional aspirations of community development and planning found in many other localities.

As a compact municipality within a large metropolitan region, the City has a diverse population that participates in all aspects of community life and enjoys the unique, small-town qualities that the City is in a unique position to offer. Being cognizant of this reality, the Comprehensive Plan should:

- Protect, sustain, and enhance the desirable qualities of:
 - The City's residential neighborhoods;
 - The City's centers of commerce; and
 - The "small town character" in Old Town and throughout the City of Fairfax

by:

- Promoting revitalization in declining neighborhoods and commercial properties;

- Promoting the replacement of facilities that are beyond reasonable repair;
- Promoting attractive, traditional design in all new and revitalized facilities; and
- Assuring efficient movement of traffic along safely designed streets.

Protect the Residential Neighborhoods

Many of the concerns raised during the Comprehensive Plan review related to the effects of new development, redevelopment, or traffic on existing residential neighborhoods. Most residents of the City of Fairfax live in well-defined neighborhoods of homes with similar characteristics, protected from many contradictory effects of nearby non-residential uses. Recent economic conditions that affect land development create pressure for expansion or redevelopment of nearby commercial land, as well as redevelopment of individual residential lots within neighborhoods. While both commercial and residential development are essential to the City's continuing prosperity, both must be carried out in a sensitive manner to assure that redevelopment does not lead to the degradation of the neighborhoods.

Promote the Centers of Commerce

A large number of issues discussed during the input sessions revolved around the need to assure that the City's downtown core and the commercial corridors will continue to be good locations for business. Most participants recognize that the jobs and taxes generated by businesses in these areas are of vital importance to the City of Fairfax and that the revitalization of these areas is necessary to assure that they remain desirable locations.

Protect the Small Town Atmosphere

Many of the concerns identified through public input relate to the effect of future changes on our "small town atmosphere." Most residents of the City of Fairfax value its existing small town atmosphere as a desirable and rarely achieved quality in the Metropolitan Washington region. Residents mention features such as the height and width of buildings, the close-knit community, and personalized government services as contributing to this atmosphere, particularly in relation to Old Town Fairfax. Due to the complex nature of "atmosphere," close attention must be given to protect this resource.

Ensure Safe and Efficient Movement of Traffic

One of the most commonly discussed concerns in the City of Fairfax is traffic, with two particular issues ranking higher than others. The large volume of through traffic on the corridors and the increasing frequency of shortcuts through the neighborhoods cause concern for safety while adding significantly to the time required for residents to travel from one part of the city to another. Any changes to traffic patterns must be carefully adjusted, recognizing that safe and convenient residential access contributes greatly to the City's quality of life, while non-residential traffic using City corridors also makes significant contributions to the City's economy.

Application of Guiding Principles to Plan Elements

Awareness of the principles above should inform all actions related to the City's growth and development. With careful vigilance, the enactment of these goals should lead to tangible changes in the City. The principles described above should bring to life a constantly improving City of Fairfax and relate to the following plan elements.

Housing and Neighborhoods

The City of Fairfax will offer a wide variety of housing types and costs for people of all backgrounds and ages, including special populations. Regardless their ages, sizes or costs, our houses will offer all of the function and facilities commensurate with modern life. Our yards and common lands will be noticeably well-attended, owing largely to increased civic pride and a high level of participation in active civic associations and homeowners' associations. Entire neighborhoods will be revitalized as a result of the City's residential incentive programs. All neighborhoods will be buffered from commercial areas in ways that minimize negative impacts while allowing convenient access to shops and restaurants. Gateways and entrances to neighborhoods from the most highly traveled streets will demonstrate the renewed vitality of the housing as well as the civic pride of the residents.

Economy

The City of Fairfax aspires to a balance of business types with the desire of producing a strong Citywide economic base. A primary objective will be the development and promotion of retail, office, restaurants and entertainment that fit well into the City's character. An important measure for any given project's efficacy will be business tax revenues that outweigh the City's cost of providing public safety, education, public works, transportation, and business incentives.

Transportation

All neighborhoods and commercial centers will be served by a fast and efficient public transit system that connects them not only to one another, but also to Metrorail, George Mason University and points throughout the Washington region. The locations and designs of major highways and local streets will minimize both the amount and the negative aspects of through-traffic so that traffic on the corridors and cut-through traffic is no longer considered problematic. Clustering of "the right mix" of businesses and careful design of individual sites and commercial centers will promote pedestrian access and assure adequate parking. An expanded trail system will provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to centers of activity throughout the City of Fairfax.

History, the Arts, and Community Appearance

The City will become a regional destination for those interested in the visual and performing arts, while it serves as a national destination for those interested in American history and urban design. The City's gateways, streets, buildings and public places will be attractively designed and landscaped, offering beautiful views in all directions. A harmonious mixture of traditional architecture, with an emphasis on the use of brick and other natural materials, will give the City a distinct identity that is universally attractive. New public plazas, public art, pedestrian facilities and renewed civic pride will lead to a high level of outdoor activity throughout the City of Fairfax.

Government

The City of Fairfax will make important decisions using a process that maximizes opportunities for participation, equally accommodates the diverse citizenry, and leads to an increasingly more livable city with increased financial strength, responsible decisions, accessible officials, and

civic pride. The City will provide government services responsively, on a personal level, and in a fair and highly efficient manner that maintains highly competitive real estate tax rates. The City's use of the best modern technology will continue to make city government more convenient and efficient, while enhancing citizen participation. Public safety facilities and services will assure that the City of Fairfax remains a very safe place in which to live and work.

Education

Close collaboration among public and private schools, universities, preschools, senior services and other organizations will assure that the highest quality of education services, facilities and supporting resources are provided to people of all backgrounds, ages and education levels. Modern facilities, dedicated educators, and convenient courses based on the interests of the City's residents will create a high demand for learning services, leading to a highly knowledgeable population in the City.

Environment

The environment of the City of Fairfax will be an ecologically balanced system that is managed to assure preservation of our most valued natural resources and conservation of other valued resources. Mature forests and trees will be prominent throughout the city; tree cover will be maximized on open space lands that are held for purposes other than recreation. A stream valley open space system with generous buffers throughout the watershed will protect the quality of water in the streams of the City of Fairfax. Streambeds will be relatively stable, carrying all storm flows without incurring unnatural erosion rates. Some parkland will be held strictly as nature preserves. City decisions regarding development, provision of services and maintenance practices will consider effects on City lands and on environmental processes.

Parks and Recreation

The City of Fairfax will accommodate the recreation needs of all of its residents, primarily by providing recreation facilities within the city parks, but also through cooperative agreements with neighboring jurisdictions. In addition to citywide recreational areas, open space and natural areas, the City will provide a system of neighborhood parks and open space to encourage neighborhood activities and civic pride. An extensive pedestrian trail system will connect all parks with all neighborhoods of the City. Some of our facilities will be recognized regionally as the best of their kind.

Open Space

The City of Fairfax will designate and preserve adequate open space to facilitate natural features preservation, conserve land for its scenic or buffering value and augment the City's recreational facilities. To accomplish this goal, the City will use a combination of land purchases, conservation easements and environmentally based land development restrictions.

Land Use

All land in the City will be planned with designated land use categories, and with all land areas organized into:

- Residential neighborhoods;
- Major or minor commercial corridors;
- Carefully planned mixed-use centers;
- Industrial or institutional centers; or
- Open space areas.

Housing will lie within clearly defined residential neighborhoods or mixed-use centers, while commercial, industrial, and institutional properties will lie within centers having clearly defined boundaries. New development will honor and reinforce this overall organization of land uses in the City.